

Vehicle Inspection Checklist

Exterior

- Windshield free of cracks
- Body panel colors match
- Magnet adheres to all steel body panels
- Fresh paint job (if yes, it could be to conceal rust)
- Seams where the trunk and hood close are properly aligned
- Seams where doors and fenders meet are properly aligned
- Free of body scratches
- Free of body dents
- Windshields wipers and blades fully functional
- Headlights and directional lights intact and fully functional

Tires

- Tires are a reputable brand name (Michelin, Bridgestone, Goodyear)
- Tires are all of the same make
- Tires are free of any cuts, bubbles or cracks
- Tread worn evenly (uneven wear indicates alignment and suspension problems)
- Spare tire, jack and lug wrench on car and fully functional
- Spare tire inflated

Engine

- Free of fluid or oil leaks
- Oil filler neck not coated with thick, black deposits
- Battery terminals free of corrosion
- Oil dip stick free of dark, black oil
- Free of odors while engine is running
- Exhaust pipe emissions are neither blue (indicates engine burns oil) or black (indicate excessive oil consumption)

Suspension

- Vehicle rests levelly
- When bouncing the vehicle's corners, no creaking noises are made
- All corners respond the same when bouncing

Interior

- Seats unworn and free of cracks
- All doors open and close freely
- Trunk opens and closes freely
- Lacks a heavy scent of air freshener (may indicate something is being concealed)
- All gauges work
- No dashboard warning lights remain illuminated
- Stereo works
- Heater works
- Air conditioner works
- Windshield wipers work
- Windshield wiper fluid dispenses properly
- All seats equipped with functional seat belts
- All seats adjust properly
- Power windows operate properly
- Sunroof opens and closes properly (if applicable)
- Car alarm works (if applicable)
- Trunk and driver-side door lock and unlock with key
- Hazard lights function properly
- Headlights, including brights, work properly

Frame

- Chassis is neither bent nor cracked
- No signs of crumpling or straightening inside the trunk
- Frame holes just inside outer edge clean and free of scratches

Automatic Transmission

- Transmission fluid looks clean, not dirty or gritty (no indicates possible internal transmission problem)
- Transmission neither slips nor delays when driving

Manual or Standard Transmission

- Each gear shifts smoothly
- No grinding noises when in reverse

Brakes

- Vehicle steers straight and does not pull to one side when applying brakes
- Parking brake engages and disengages freely
- No grinding noises when applying
- Wheels do not lock when applying antilock brakes (if applicable)

Steering

- Vehicle does not drift to one side without prodding
- Vehicle is stable; no shaking or vibrating
- No resistance in the steering wheel when turning
- No clicking or clunking when turning

Miscellaneous

- Car manual located in the glove compartment
- Instructions included for any accessories
- Service and repair records available
- Owner has title

Other Insights

- Walk away if the seller objects to your inspection
- Don't feel rushed while inspecting
- Try to get a mechanic to assess checklist results
- Use any flaws against the asking price